

February 7, 2019

The mission of the American Academy of Pediatrics is to *attain optimal physical, mental, and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents and young adults.*

Pediatricians are trained specialists and experts on children's health. We are fortunate to have outstanding, nationally and internationally recognized pediatricians in our state who have expertise in all areas of children's health.

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, representing nearly 1000 pediatricians in the state **supports House Bill 7005 AN ACT PROHIBITING THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PARENTAL STATEMENTS CONCERNING RELIGIOUS OBJECTIONS TO VACCINATION BY SCHOOL NURSES AND PERMITTING MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY TO ACKNOWLEDGE SUCH STATEMENTS.**

Routine childhood immunizations are vital to individual and society health. Across the United States, immunization rates vary, and as a result, some communities have experienced preventable disease outbreaks. Higher immunization rates protect vulnerable children who are too young to be vaccinated as well as those who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons.

Connecticut has a very high rate of vaccinations, and it is imperative that we keep it that way. One of the ways we accomplish that is by mandating certain vaccines for school entry. The more vaccine exemptions that are allowed, the more at risk it places other children to devastating disease.

Currently, Connecticut allows non-medical exemption, which generally here are religious exemptions. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that state laws permitting non-medical exemptions should be completely eliminated. This piece of legislation will simply remove school nurses from the list of people who can acknowledge that such immunization would be contrary to the religious beliefs of such child or the parents or guardian of such child. We believe you should not stop at school nurses, but should eliminate this non-medical exemption totally.

For further information, here is a fact sheet on immunizations produced by the AAP.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.